visions north

TALKING ABOUT YUKON LAND CLAIMS

Passing on culture and traditions: Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Elder Chuck Hume paying respect at a gravesite near the Dempster Highway, Yukon. The drum was created and presented as a gift to the Aboriginal Leadership Development Program by graduate Gord Planes, T'Souke First Nation in BC. All participants, past, present and future are invited to play it – to sound out the traditional call to gather, enabling the exchange of stories, culture and traditions, creating passion and vision.

The undeniably powerful beat of the drum engages. It awakens the senses, eliciting a primordial response. It resonates and ignites a physical and emotional memory not unlike the experience of hearing a long forgotten favourite song that is reminiscent of a specific snapshot of time in your life. It is a trigger and you can't help but smile.

The drum holds special significance. It represents the life force of the ALDP – a four-year leadership program for Aboriginal people based out of Yukon. Initiated in 2000, the program continues to evolve, gaining momentum and forging innovative leadership training for Aboriginal participants from across the country.

In May 2007, following an intensive week of training at Yukon College, we gathered to celebrate the achievements and aspirations of the program's fifth graduating class. The evening encapsulated a treasury of memories.

The graduates stood on stage, certificates in hand, and according to what has become traditional protocol for this ceremony, participants, elders and instructors were invited to step forward to contribute to the ceremony. The graduates embraced the moment and collectively brought the graduation ceremony to new heights as they presented a retrospective slide show of their four-year ALDP journey. Graduate Jean McIsaac further commemorated the experience by showcasing a music video she created for the ALDP – *From the Four Directions – We Are One*. We were swept up in vivid emotion as spiritual and contemporary images and words of wisdom came to life through powerful storytelling and song. The presentations were a poignant reminder of the potential within each graduate and of the gifts that they each have to share as they embark on their respective leadership journeys.

The ceremony continued to build as graduate Karen Haugen from the Huu-ay-aht First Nation in BC stepped forward on behalf of her class and presented as a gift a talking stick, intricately carved into an image of a bear, as one of their legacies to the program. "I wanted to present the future ALDP participants with something that can help them, guide them, and give them the strength and courage to share who they are. A bear signifies guardian, protector, the wise one, or kinsman. The bear will help the person say what she or he needs to express." The talking stick will continue as a unifying force, bringing Parks Canada employees, First Nations and communities from across the country together in Whitehorse, to share in cultural traditions for years to come. The graduation ceremony concluded with a powerful and intensely personal testimonial by graduate Todd Sikkes on the incredible ability of individuals to passionately engage in developing their leadership potential and be transformed.

The ALDP continues to provide a unique developmental opportunity for Parks Canada employees from across the country to begin a leadership journey. If you would like to find out more information please contact the coordinator, Nicola Pritchett, at (867) 667-3973.

ALDP graduate Ria Coleman shares her knowledge of stretching a deer hide. (from left to right) Ria Coleman, Barb Hume, Audrey Provost and Amy Proven.

ALDP participant Heather Callaghan demonstrates her leadership style in a team building activity at Equinox Rox, Takhini Hot Springs.

Far right: 2007 graduates include (from bottom to top) Christiane Carrier (The Forks National Historic Site, Manitoba), Karen Haugen (Pacific Rim National Park, BC), Linda McKay (Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba), Reg Syliboy (Ottawa), Jonathan Tsetso (Nahanni National Park, NWT), Morgan Anderson (Gros Morne National Park, Newfoundland), Todd Sikkes (Jasper National Park, Alberta).

Right: ALDP alumni Mary Jane Johnson, Kluane First Nation, shares her wealth of traditional knowledge with first year participants at Kathleen Lake, May 2007.

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Right: ALDP alumni Mary Jane Johnson, Kluane First Nation, shares her wealth of traditional knowledge with first year participants at Kathleen Lake, May 2007.

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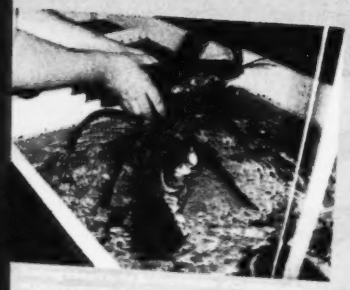
First Nation and Inuit National Sci

In August 2007, three Yukon youth from the Kluane and Champagne & Aishihik First Nations attended the fifth annual First Nations and Inuit National Science Camp in Halifax, Nova Scotia and Fredericton, New Brunswick. Aboriginal students from across Canada competed to attend the camp with the goal of developing and exploring their interest in science — and to have fun!



DreamCatcher Yukon

"Creator does not make junk, each and every one of us has a purpose and a gift to offer the World." – Beverly Sembsmoen.

DreamCatcher Yukon is an innovative leadership and e-mentoring program that fosters career skills development in Grade 9 to 12 students. The program is designed to empower Northern youth by connecting them with mentors in their career area of choice and to set them on the path to success. DreamCatcher Yukon captures students' ideas and interests, exposes the students to the outside world and gives them tangible steps to realise their career potential while incorporating local values and opportunities.

The program is administered through the DreamCatcher Yukon Mentoring Society co-founded by Beverly Sembsmoen, a Daklaweidi of Carcross/Tagish First Nation and an implementation official for the Carcross/Tagish First Nation Government, and Josh Silvertown, a graduate student at the University of Western Ontario's Richard Ivey School of Business and a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Ontario Cancer Institute in Toronto. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada provides funding for this program through its First Nation and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy under the Yukon Region's Career Promotion and Awareness Program.

In 2005/06, a pilot project matched 14 students from the Carcross Community School with 14 professional mentors from across Canada. Students learned about a number of traditional and non-traditional career choices and discovered first-hand the importance of staying in school to fulfill their dreams.

"This program is really about keeping kids in school," says Beverly Sembsmoen. "Our goal is to lower the number of high school dropouts and we know Grade 9 is a crucial year – especially for students in Yukon communities. This program shows students, in an interactive way, how their interests can lead to a rewarding future – if they stay in school."

In its essence, DreamCatcher is a career counselling program with the added dimension of interactive exploration. Students are matched with a Canadian professional who works in the student's chosen career. A great deal of effort is placed on the selection process to ensure the most effective match between student and mentor.

Over 100 students have participated in the program to date from schools throughout the territory, including Whitehorse, Watson Lake, Teslin, Pelly Crossing, Ross River, Old Crow and Mayo. The team of Canadian mentors are from diverse careers and include a navy officer, entrepreneurs, teachers, doctors, photographers, a police officer, a veterinarian, athletes, a video game designer, a retail associate, a forensic scientist, a paramedic and a mechanical engineer.

The program is delivered through the Internet and students are encouraged to ask a lot of questions and explore many avenues with their mentor. Teachers supervise the students, and mentors are screened in-depth before joining the program. The DreamCatcher Yukon Society has developed a kit for teachers to help them introduce the program in their classrooms.

Watson Lake Grade 7 to 9 participants with Josh Silvertown (far left), Bev Sembsmoen (far right), teacher Linda McDonald (second left), and principal Carson Atkinson (second from right).

Registration for this academic year begins in January 2008 and the two-month program starts in March.

DreamCatcher Yukon believes that an empowering, one-to-one, high-quality mentoring program gives students confidence and skills to pursue their dreams and aspirations.

To find out more about the program visit www.dreamcatcheryukon.ca or contact Beverly Sembsmoen at the Carcross/Tagish First Nation Government (867) 821-8229.

ence Camp

Searching for Our Heritage

In the 1800s and possibly earlier, traders, scientists, whalers, missionaries and ethnographers visited the North for the first time. Many collected clothing, tools, domestic items and biological specimens from people living in a region now known as Yukon. When they returned to their homes, many took these items with them. A lot of the artifacts ended up in museums and private collections all over the globe.

Over the past 20 years, staff from the Searching For Our Heritage (SFOH) project have been locating artifacts and items of cultural importance to Yukon First Nation people. The Museums Unit of the Yukon Department of Tourism and Culture has entered the results into an electronic database which is available to Yukon First Nations, cultural heritage centres and researchers.

Child's shirt made from moose skin and tanned caribou skin; made in the Pelly River area – Southern Tutchone; collected at Lake Bennett summer 1911, Canadian Museum of Civilization.

As part of her heritage officer duties, Sarah travels to the communities to talk about the Searching For Our Heritage project. "We have binders containing photographs of the artifacts for each community so we can show people what has been located," Sarah Charlie said. "It's nice to be able to give people a chance to see the artifacts and to understand their significance without them having to sit in front of a computer screen. This makes it easier for the elders. It also gives us a chance to create more awareness, gain new leads, learn more and correct any misinformation."

If you would like to find out more about the Searching For Our Heritage project, contact Sarah Charlie at the Yukon government's Museums Unit at (867) 667-8905.

Access to the database provides valuable information to clothing and tool-making workshops, cultural centre exhibits, books and posters.

The work began as part of a Young Canada Works summer project in 1987. There are now close to 6,000 artifacts registered in the database, most of which include photographic images.

Funding for the database project has come from various partners over the years: the Federal Museum Assistance Program, Young Canada Works and the Yukon government's Museums Unit and Arts Section. The database now operates with a small annual contribution from the Yukon government's Land Claims Implementation Fund.

The SFOH database is accessible to First Nations in the communities. It is updated on an ongoing basis when new information is received. Currently, SFOH is not available to the public at large, but Sarah Charlie points out that First Nation governments do have the database downloaded on their computers. Some of the objects are sacred and must be handled with sensitivity.

Gwich'in caribou shirt and trousers, collected in eastern Alaska, near Yukon River, 1862, by Bernard Ross – National Museums of Scotland collection.

Detail of quillwork on a Gwich'in man's shirt, Smithsonian Institution – National Museum of Natural History, collected in 1866.

Sophie Isaac from Burwash demonstrating the "old style" of wearing a ground squirrel robe and carrying a baby, Jenny Joe (Isaac) in background, 1948. Isaac bush camp on Big Arm of Kluane Lake – Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Ka'Kon Camp 2007 – Healing Broken Connections

A traditional First Nations ceremony was revived during the Ka'Kon Camp in August at Congdon Creek in Kluane National Park and Reserve. The camp provided an opportunity for the Kluane First Nation (KFN), Champagne and Aishihik First Nations (CAFN), and Parks Canada to acknowledge past inequities and move forward.

Ka'Kon is a Southern Tutchone word meaning "peace potlatch." At this camp, KFN elders forgave Parks Canada for establishing a park that essentially removed First Nations people from the land within the park. First Nation elders say that the last Ka'Kon ceremony was held more than one hundred years ago. This ceremony shows the willingness of First Nation people to forgive past injustices and move forward to rediscover and use the park land within their traditional territory.

About 80 people participated in the August Ka'Kon Camp, including CAFN and KFN members, Parks Canada representatives, and special guests from the Wrangell-St. Elias region of Alaska. A variety of traditional activities were passed on by elders, including building a njál (brush hut) and smoke house, moose hide scraping, telling traditional stories of the area, fishing in Kluane Lake, atl'atl making contests, a peace potlatch ceremony, stick gambling, a helicopter trip and gopher hunting at Big Horn Lake. Rainy days limited sheep hunting efforts and some other outdoor activities, however participants still carried out most of the planned events.

The week-long camp was coordinated by KFN and is a part of the Healing Broken Connections Project created through Parks Canada's ecological integrity funding. The project goals are to encourage the people of CAFN and KFN to once again use the land and resources within the park, and to integrate traditional knowledge into the management of the park.

For more information on the Healing Broken Connections Project, please contact Project Coordinator Craig McKinnon at cmckinnon@cafn.ca or (867) 634-4236.

Kluane First Nation Elder Margaret Johnson cuts the hair off a moose hide to prepare it for tanning.

Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Elder Chuck Hume applying moss between the poles of the njál.

New Faces – Changing Places

New RCMP officer in Yukon

Working for Community

Visions North

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This newsletter was produced through the efforts of many. A special thanks to the First Nation people and public service employees who provided information for the articles in this newsletter.

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CYFN

Yukon Government

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

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